

A
FEW WORDS
OF
Anglia
PLAIN TRUTH,
ON THE
SUBJECT OF THE PRESENT
NEGOTIATION FOR PEACE.

BY A
MEMBER OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

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Cambridge ;
PRINTED AND SOLD BY BENJAMIN FLOWER ;
AND BY G. G. AND J. ROBINSON, AND T. CONDER, LONDON ;
AND J. MARCH, NORWICH.

M DCC XC VII.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]



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FEW WORDS, &c.

TO watch with vigilant attention the conduct of those who are entrusted with the concerns of the public, is at all times the right and the duty, of every individual in the state; but great occasions only demand their interference and controul. If there can be any period at which every man in the nation ought to lay aside all private and selfish concerns, and be alive only to the public interest, it is the present—when the deliberations of a few hours may affect the happiness of ages to come, and waste or save the lives of thousands.

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We are now arrived at the second stage of a long, bloody, and expensive war, which has afforded us any prospect of the return of peace; and if our ministers are as anxious as they pretend to be, to atone for their past errors, we have some probability of being repaid for all the calamities we have suffered, by a long and lasting tranquillity. But in my opinion, the present calm is deceitful, and only portends a longer and more violent storm; for I am fully and firmly convinced, that ministers are not sincere in that which they pretend, and that nothing more is meant than to throw the odium of continuing the war on the French; and thus revive the drooping spirits of the nation, and push them on to further exertions in a fruitless and unavailing contest. I have formed this opinion not rashly or hastily; but from a long attention to the language, conduct, and situation of ministry, before the war began, and during the whole of its continuance: if I am mistaken, my error is of no consequence to
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the public ; if not, it may serve to put them on their guard against treachery and deceit.

If Mr. Pitt had ever shewn any single mark of approbation towards the French revolution in its earliest origin, if he had ever allowed that the French wanted a constitution, and were justified in their resistance to oppression, long before such a declaration could have been construed into any thing, but a general avowal of his sentiments, and long before the revolution could have the most remote effect on this country, there would have been some ground for supposing that he is not generally an enemy to the rights of the people, and that he does not think government to be the property of a few individuals: but his constant silence, even on the earliest events of the French revolution, and his virulent declamation against the French people, ever since he has deigned to mention them in the House of Commons, leave no shadow of a doubt that it
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was his design in the beginning of the war, to tear up by the roots those principles upon which the French deposed Louis the XVI. and changed their form of government from a monarchy to a republic.

To prevent the propagation of a principle which establishes the right of the people to enquire into, and controul the conduct of their rulers, is undoubtedly the interest of every minister who wishes to govern independent of that controul, and to give the people only so much liberty, as will render them patient under his authority : If such is the opinion of Mr. Pitt, and I will presently appeal to facts to prove that it is, what has there recently occurred that can make him more inclined to peace now, than when the war began ? Has he gained any one object that he avowed, and is he not farther from that which he secretly designed ? Are the French principles of government materially changed since the beginning
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of the war, and are they less likely to be propagated when the two nations will have a constant intercourse, than when all intercourse is prohibited?

But the point on which I rest the whole force of my opinion, is, that peace can never be the interest of ministers: that this is their opinion may be proved from their conduct in one single instance, the reform of the House of Commons; for I consider this reform as the inevitable consequence of peace. Let us examine what is the object of that reform, and how the prime minister has endeavoured to evade it. By a reform in the mode of choosing the House of Commons, it was intended to secure both the electors and the elected, from the corruptions of government, to leave to the former a free choice of their representatives, and to remove from the latter every temptation to betray their trust: but when this is completed what becomes of the minister? his power is gone for ever, all management of the
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House of Commons is at an end: from being their master, he must become their servant. A humiliating reverse! And who that knows the character of Mr. PITT, or of any minister that has long enjoyed power, can believe that he will lend his aid or sanction to such a measure, or that he will not oppose it by every means he can make use of?

With the House of Commons at his command, he contrived to get rid of the question long before the French revolution was thought of, at a time of peace and tranquillity, when it might have been effected without danger, and though the people had long been eager for the event, the apparent wisdom and virtue of his administration reconciled them to the loss of what they so ardently wished for, and lulled them into a fatal security which has been the cause of so many calamities: for had a reform in the representation been completed ten years since, the present war had never happened.

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Now such was the state of affairs till the effects of the French revolution began to be felt in this country: and how were they felt? by exciting discussions on the origin and corruptions of government, by turning the question of parliamentary reform, and by lessening the respect for the arbitrary distinctions of birth and fortune: can we wonder then that those who profit by these corruptions, should wish to silence those who expose their iniquity?

Such were the motives for the war on the part of Ministry, for which they had long been seeking a pretence, when the French in the year 1792 intoxicated with their sudden and rapid conquests, and exasperated against all monarchical governments, passed two ridiculous decrees with a design of exciting insurrections in every country in Europe, and thus weakening the opposition against their own: but finding that the majority of the people of this country were attached to the constitution,

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they were convinced of their error, and would gladly have retracted by entering into a negociation which might do away the cause of offence. But ministers were too much rejoiced at the opportunity to relinquish it so easily; and supposing with an equal degree of ignorance, that they could overturn the French Government, and restore the monarchy in its full splendor, they disdainfully refused to acknowledge a republic which they believed in a few months they could level with the dust and bring the authors of it to condign and ignominious punishment.

Now, this object being yet unattained, is it probable they will so easily relinquish what they have so ardently pursued? Does their language, even at this moment shew that they believe it unattainable, or if they do, are they not convinced, that even the continuance of the war must be much less dangerous to them than peace? For peace whenever it comes must be attended with such effects, as even the present

sent administration, were they ten times more ingenuous, or ten times more incapable than they are, can never prevent.

Peace will put an end to that monopoly of trade, which from the present confusion of Europe we at present enjoy : we shall then be unable to support the heavy load of taxes which the war has encreased, and we shall feel the necessity of a reform in our expenditure ; a reform in every department of the state ; and the less money there is spent in corruption, in the same proportion the power of ministers will decrease : peace will soften those national prejudices and antipathies which it is the business of war to excite and keep alive : peace will convert our enemies into friends, and rouse an emulation without rivalry in arts, in manners, and in commerce which all the vigilance of ministry can never stifle : peace then, is the interest of the people ; war is the interest of ministers : but if we can believe them to be a set of men so pure and disinterested,

as to prefer the public good to their own, then we may believe they are sincere in their professions, and anxious to restore to us the blessings of peace. But let us not be deceived. Their present pacific language is only an artful disguise, to conceal the real baseness and treachery of their designs, and to plunder us with greater security.

Another argument against their sincerity is the language they have constantly used on the war, and towards the French, whenever they have had occasion to speak of them. Is it probable, if there is any such thing as truth in human nature, that they can have confidence in any treaty which they can form with such men?—nay, if they have any confidence in their own assertions will they be desirous to hasten a peace with a people whom they have declared to be on the very brink of ruin?—are all the laboured and ingenious calculations of Mr. Pitt, Lord Mornington, and Sir Francis D'Ivernois to be forgotten or despised

fed, if what they have written and spoken on the French finances is still believed, and is not laughed at as the theory of shallow politicians, will ministers be justified on their own principles in making peace with a nation when they are on the point of yielding to their most sanguine wishes, nay at a time too when they trumpet forth our own resources as not to be exhausted, though, perhaps, they are as much mistaken in their own strength as in that of their enemies?

But, at the very time they talk to us of peace they are preparing us for war: for they know the terms which a victorious enemy has a right to demand, and which they will endeavour to make it appear are incompatible with the honour and safety of the nation to accede to. We shall again be called upon to defend our religion, our honour, and our property, and in a few weeks all hopes of accommodation

tion' will cease, and we shall again be exposed to the multiplied calamities of famine and war.

In the mean time, let us stop for a moment to reflect, what will be the condition of this country in a few years. We began the war with all Europe on our side ; we shall soon have all Europe against us: we began when France was the only republic ; we stand a chance to end it when ours will be the only monarchy, and it will then be the interest of all to destroy the modern Carthage which perpetuates a war against the liberties of mankind. The French will no doubt pursue their plan of destroying our commerce by shutting us out from all the ports of Europe; and if their present government succeeds in gaining the confidence of the people, arts, liberty, and commerce will revive ; specie will again appear ; labour and industry will be again encouraged,

encouraged, and even in the midst of a desolating war, France will rival us in that on which our existence as a nation depends. If such should be the case, our calamities will come fast upon us ; our resources will be lessened and our expenditure increased ; our debts will grow larger as we are less able to pay them ; and we shall feel all the miseries of poverty, with all the artificial wants of riches.

If our enemies increase, we must decrease, without being prepared for the change ; for, ministers to answer their own diabolical purposes, have constantly buoyed us up with the opinion of our own sufficiency, with permitting us to suppose the possibility of a reverse of fortune, which in every human probability is not far distant. The great landed and the trading interests, have not as yet felt the effects of the war ; but they will feel it, and their cry will then be for peace ; but not till the middle ranks are nearly annihilated by
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the increased price of every necessary, and every comfort.

As soon as ever trade suffers a check, the blow will vibrate through every finew of the landed interest, though both are now so confident of our prosperity, that they will not suppose it possible for a change to happen while the war lasts; but it will, as sure as day follows night. I do not mean to say that peace will not have the same effect: in the nature of things it must, and in a greater degree. I am only arguing for the necessity of preparing for that change of circumstances which cannot be prevented, and preserving the country from the horrors of a revolution: for if the war lasts three years, such will be the general poverty and dissatisfaction of the nation, that a revolution must be the consequence: for as the credit of our funds is supported solely by our commerce, as soon as that feels the slightest shock, we must either resort to French schemes of finance, to pay our interest and
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our expences ; or government must become bankrupt :—a calamity which the funded system has in every country experienced, and can only be averted in this, by œconomy and reform. If the nation can be made to feel this, they will omit no means of obtaining it, if not our ruin is at hand ; and such is the desperate ambition of ministers, that they will rather perish in the wreck than survive their power.

I most heartily wish to impress it on the minds of my countrymen that peace cannot be delayed with safety—that every year, nay every hour will leave us in a worse condition, and improve the situation of our enemies—that we have much to lose, and that they have every thing to gain, as they have already arisen from that point of depression, below which no nation can exist or maintain itself as such—and, that every day will bring us nearer to that point which it was the pretended purpose of ministers to avoid :—that the

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interest

interest of the ministry and the interest of the nation are totally opposite—that to the former the war is a certain gain, to the latter a certain loss—that we are not to look for an honourable peace in the common acceptation of the word, which means that we should obtain the object we contended for, whether just or unjust; but that a peace is only so far honourable, as it can save us from destruction; for the honour of a nation consists in its prosperity, not in ridiculous notions of conquest and military glory.

Let us now look to the circumstances in which we stand at present, and then consider the nature of the peace we must expect to make. Our enemies after having conquered every power on the continent leagued against them, and obtained even more than they at first aimed at, have now only one enemy left, which is this country; but that enemy which was the soul of the confederacy, and on every account more formidable than all the rest put together, is now humbled to the dust,
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and whether we make peace or continue the war, our pre-eminence over other nations, is gone for ever : we are now completely in the power of our enemies, and they have three different methods to complete our ruin: the two first are sure and steady ; the last, though slow, is certain in the event, if the present men and the present system continue in power. Either they will require such terms of peace as must effectually reduce our naval superiority at once ; or they will do it by a continuance of the war, if we cannot agree upon terms ; or lastly, they will offer to make peace with us upon such moderate and equitable conditions as we cannot refuse, trusting to the circumstances which must inevitably give them a decided superiority over us in commerce, and every thing else which contributes to the prosperity and glory of a state. To say what these circumstances are, cannot be difficult, when we consider on the one hand, the nature of their government—the extent of their empire—and their various

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advantages

advantages of produce, soil, and climate ; and on the other hand, our government, our debts, and our taxes.

One of the great stumbling blocks in the last negotiation is removed ; we have no longer the Netherlands to contend for ; but there are other difficulties yet remaining which will not easily be settled ; for, though the particulars are different, the object in both is the same : the last affair, stripped of all the tinsel and parade of diplomatic ornament, simply resolves itself into this :—The French were determined to retain the Austrian Netherlands ; and this the ministry knew, as well the day they began to negotiate, as after Lord Malmesbury had written his last letter : and they know now, that the French will insist on the cession of all our conquests, to themselves and their Allies ; and are prepared to refuse what they will term a concession inglorious to the national honour. Now, let the nation determine, whether they prefer their
safety

safety or their honour ; for the obstinate perseverance of ministry has reduced us to the alternative, not of choosing whether PITT, or Fox, shall make the peace—whether the peace shall be good or bad—but, whether we shall have peace or ruin ; for to enable us to contend with an enemy so far our superior, we must bring forth the whole of our resources—we must stake our last shilling on the event of the war, and, while we are talking of honour and glory, and constitution and religion, and property, we shall be left without bread to eat, or a shirt to cover us ; and then find out that we have been the dupes of a profligate unprincipled junto, who had only their own interest in view, while they pretended to be consulting our happiness.

To such a state are we reduced, by a long, unexampled, and implicit confidence in one man : whether his virtues, or his talents have entitled him to this total freedom from every restraint and controul

controul it is too late to examine, with a view to what is past ; but it may have some effect in saving the lives, and properties, and liberties, which must yet fall a sacrifice to the continuance of his power : for his system, like ROBESPIERRE'S, is a system of extermination and blood, and can never end but with the ruin of himself or his enemies. It is not so much with French *men* as with French *principles* that he is at war, and there exists between them no point of union or accommodation : light and darkness, are not more at variance, nor more opposite in their effects : they are for peace—he is for war : they are for liberty founded on the basis of equal rights, and secured by equal representation—he is for liberty only as it suits his own purposes of interest or ambition : they are for the universe—he is for himself ; and, as two suns shine not in one sphere, PITT and LIBERTY can never exist together.

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Among the many qualities requisite to form a great statesman, a man fitted to direct the affairs and consult the interests of large societies, none seem more indispensable, than honesty and sagacity : without the former he will be unwilling to prefer the public good to his own ; without the latter he will be unable to discern it ; but when both these are united, happy is that nation which is so governed. Honesty consists in having good intentions : sagacity in tracing effects upwards to their causes, and downwards to their utmost extent ; in discerning the various complications of circumstances which may promote or retard them ; and piercing with prospective eye into the works of futurity. A wise and good man when placed at the helm of state, if there are complaints, will listen to them ; if there are corruptions, will remove them ; if there are grievances, will redress them ; he will anticipate revolution by reform, rather than endeavour to prevent it by violence and force. If principles

ples of government new and extensive arise in other countries, which have a tendency to change the state of society throughout the world, he will not rashly endeavour to arrest them in their progress, but by prudent and gradual accommodation will prepare to meet their effects, and thus depriving them of all power to do harm, will convert them to the advantage of his own country ; while in others, by fermenting with opposite principles, they are for a while producing confusion and distress : he will distinguish between wants of a partial and temporary nature, and the operation of maxims congenial to the mind of man ; between the machinations of a party, and the will of a whole people ; and in either case, before he opposes them, he will estimate the power, the spirit, and the resources of his enemy, and compare them with the means by which he is enabled to contend. But as the friend of human nature, he will never resort to force, till every means of accommodation has been tried and exhausted without success.

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Now that the man who has governed the affairs of this country for so many years, possesses both qualities in such a degree, as to entitle him to the unlimited confidence with which he has been entrusted, cannot without gross ignorance or shameless flattery be maintained; yet there must be men who give him credit for both: if any thing can undeceive them, it will not be argument, but some force more powerful—the loss of all they wish to preserve, their liberty, their property, and their comfort:—but there are others probably, who are not so credulous and so obstinate in their confidence; with these men it is possibly yet not too late to argue, and they may be convinced that they have been mistaken and willing to make amends for their error to themselves and to their country: a slight examination of the minister's political conduct may suffice for the purpose.

To begin then with the first criterion of excellence in a prime minister, his
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honesty, with the great criterion of honesty, the conformity between professions and actions, we need go no farther than his conduct on the reform of parliament and the slave trade, in both of which momentous questions, we shall find his words and actions completely at variance ; and it will puzzle even his most zealous defenders to reconcile what he himself has never attempted. Without doubt it is in every one's remembrance, that the first avowed principles of his political life were peace and reform ; his first speech in parliament was against the ruinous American war ; and it is a singular instance of political profligacy, that he should afterwards be the author of a war, compared with which the other is in every point insignificant : words could not express more strongly than his did, the necessity of a reform, before he was minister ; but no sooner was the object of his ambition attained, than he seemed to have forgotten all his former professions ; his conduct and language lost all their spirit, and instead

stead of supporting the question with one of his strong confiding majorities, he suffered this first produce of his youthful love to perish without seeing the light ; for like Jupiter it would without doubt have dethroned its father. A few trifling instances of œconomy in some of the public offices, and the apparent prosperity of the finances, soon satisfied the thoughtless and the slighted multitude, that with such a minister no reform was necessary ; and thus foolishly trusting to men instead of principles, they suffered tamely that opportunity to pass by, which can never return, in times equally favourable, in times equally peaceful, and prosperous.

To put the delinquency of the minister then in the strongest point of view, it is only necessary to state these plain facts ; a reform was acknowledged to be indispensable by himself, and the majority of the nation ; there was a period of near seven years between the beginning of his administration, and the beginning of the

disturbances in France, when that reform might have been safely completed, but he omitted the opportunity, because a reform must have lessened his own power and interest: he is therefore deeply responsible for all the consequences that have happened and will happen from that omission to the remotest posterity; for that single point of his conduct, involves in it a greater complication of circumstances, than it ever fell to the lot of one man to be the author of: to enumerate them would be tedious, because they are numerous, and unnecessary because they are obvious; for we feel them every day in some new tax, some new encroachment on our liberty, or the apprehension of some new calamity.

On the other question it is not necessary at present to enlarge, as not immediately connected with the subject, but I should be sorry to insult even the meanest understanding, by asking how to explain Mr. PITT's conduct on the SLAVE TRADE.

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On the score of honesty then, we find that he has little to boast on two material points ; with regard to the war, he has shewn that he possesses very little honesty, or very little sagacity, and perhaps very little of either : if he began the war solely with a view to perpetuate his own power, regardless of its consequences to the nation, he was dishonest, beyond the common limits of dishonesty, as much as a mighty conqueror is a greater villain than a highwayman ; if he began it with the honest intention of the national good, without foreseeing those consequences which others did foresee, he is blind compared to them, as a mole is compared to an eagle : but to speak plainly, I do not think him entitled even to the benefit of this dilemma, for his conduct throughout the war leaves little room to believe that he is either wise or honest, and if success be the test of merit, his talents must be rated low indeed, for in every thing he has projected, he has failed ; in every thing he has foretold, he has been mistaken ;

taken; his plans have been formed without wisdom, and his conjectures without foresight. I speak of Dunkirk, Toulon, La Vendee, Quiberon, and Holland; of the French Republic, and the French Finances: but I will spare his friends the bitter recollection of his ignorance, insolence, and misconduct, through the whole of the war to the present moment.

After this it will be asked, in what then consists the boasted excellence of this omnipotent ruler? I will answer in a few words;—in a thorough knowledge of the low and little arts of finesse and intrigue; of the low and little motives by which mankind are actuated in the common concerns of the world; in a species of pompous but hollow eloquence, which confounds even where it fails to convince; and in a haughty imperious temper, which defies opposition and enforces compliance; and, to shew the value of honesty in the strongest possible light, when even the appearance of it can acquire such confidence,

fidence, he is indebted for the influence
 he possesses over some part of the nation,
 more than to any thing else, to the opi-
 nion they yet entertain of his integrity.
 To conduct the common affairs of a state
 in common times, his talents are fully
 equal, for he understands the routine of
 finance, and the management of parlia-
 ment, but to take a first part on the great
 theatre of human affairs, when great pas-
 sions are at work, and great events are
 the consequence, he has shewn himself
 completely insufficient.

To deny that the situation of this
 country is at present alarming, beyond
 any example of former times, when we
 consider the prosperity we have enjoyed,
 and the reverse we are likely to expe-
 rience, must arise either from great ig-
 norance, or the blindest prejudice : with-
 out doubt, the temper of the times must
 be managed with delicacy and skill; and
 it requires no small share of political sa-
 gacity to know when to concede and
 when to enforce, so that concession shall
 not

not be construed into weakness, nor force recoil upon itself. Certainly that sagacity has not been shewn with regard to the sailors at Portsmouth: time only can discover whether it has to those at Sheerness. It requires moderation and humanity to treat with a lenient and a healing hand, the complaints and the sufferings of the lower ranks of the people, so that they shall have nothing to gain by a change of affairs. But are these virtues to be found in the men who have scoffed at moderation, and laughed humanity out of countenance? It requires a considerable knowledge of political economy to support the sinking state of public credit; to employ the industry of the country to the greatest advantage; and to preserve the balance of trade against the influence of our rivals. But can this be expected from men who tell us that paper money is real wealth; and that the number of bankrupts is a sign of the prosperity of the country? To understand the temper and situation of the different powers

powers on the continent, as they may affect the interest of this country, requires no small share of the knowledge of human nature, and the politics of Europe. But what claim have those men to such knowledge, who have bullied, without enforcing their threats, and praised the fidelity of their allies, at the time they were making treaties of peace and alliance with their enemies? To conciliate the affections of different parties, and to extort approbation, even from the most hostile, require urbanity of manners and liberality of sentiment. But are these to be found in him, who has more than once applied the most opprobrious epithets to a man, at least as wise and as honest as himself? If discretion and prudence are necessary in a statesman, what shall we expect from the riper years of him, who, in the ardor of his juvenile ambition, to be thought the friend of the prime minister, declared in the house of commons, that that great man could not keep his appointments there,

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when he had superior engagements? * Finally, if this country can only be saved from ruin, by peace, by economy and reform; by an attentive regard to the rights of the people, and a constant compliance with their will, whenever it shall be fairly expressed—Can this be expected from the men who have no interest in peace; who have treated the idea of economy with derision and insult; and have solemnly declared themselves averse to reform; have never passed one law on the side of popular rights; and who came into power against the voice of the house of commons; and continue there against the voice of the people.

But there is no instance in the annals of history, of the same man or men having brought a country to the verge of ruin, and then saving it from the consequence of their own measures; and it is almost impossible that there ever should: for

* Mr. Wyndham's Speech on La Fayette.

the talents and dispositions that can do the one, cannot do the other.

I have now traced with a faint hand the character, views and sentiments of the minister; and from these let it be asked, if it is probable he will ever be disposed to peace; and if not, how is peace to be had? There remains only one mode, a general expression of the wishes of the nation, if they wish it; if not, a revolution in a few years must be the consequence. If Mr. Pitt will make peace, the nation will ask no more of him; they will do the rest themselves: and they will forgive him all that is past, for the sake of all that is to come. Let him measure back the steps he has taken to ruin us, and probably we shall yet be safe; and if he does right by compulsion, his friends will call it virtue; and praise him for what he could not avoid. But he never will, he never can make peace with republicans; even now he is forming criminal hopes of the success of his

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intrigues,

intrigues, to create divisions among his enemies; and continue the war till they are beat into compliance with his designs. His words, his interest, his existence, as a minister, are pledged beyond redemption, to destroy French principles, or perish in the attempt: for that day on which the peace is signed, his present power is at an end for ever; and he knows it: he knows too that the war will be equally his ruin, but less suddenly.

Since then we are not to look to Mr. PITT for peace, to whom are we to apply; in whom are we to trust for that happy event, but to him who, as the head of the opposite party, and a man of the most splendid talents, can alone be entrusted with the safety of the country? As on that subject his steady and uniform opinion has preserved him from the necessity of any sacrifices or any contradictions. But while I thus speak of Mr. Fox, I, by no means, forget the errors of his public or his private life; for
these

these have done his country more mischief, than those of any other individual ever did in the present times. If the people had not mistrusted him, they could never so long have been duped by his rival and opponent. But his late conduct has made some atonement for his past errors ; and he can only come into power, by pledging himself to a reform in parliament, which will be too strong a controul to suffer him, even if he is disposed, to misuse the confidence of the nation, and forget their interest in his own love of power.

If the opinion of the nation has lately suffered any alteration by the circumstances which have occurred, if they are convinced that the war can be no longer continued with any chance of success, let them express their sentiments firmly and unanimously ; let all animosity and party spirit be laid aside, let one desire animate every heart, and there is no power in the state to controul their commands.

commands. But if every effort to arouse them to a sense of their danger shall be to no purpose ; if they are still resolved to trust to a set of men, whose interest it is to deceive them ; the innocent must suffer with the guilty, and the whole nation be involved in one common ruin. May Heaven avert so fatal a calamity ; or may those who suffer, sustain with fortitude a fate, which they had not power to prevent.

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